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PHASES OF A CRISIS

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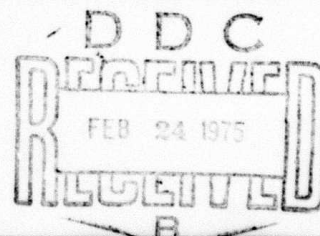
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Phases of a Crisis

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January, 1975

TR&A Technical Report #25
Threat Recognition and Analysis Project

Phases of a Crisis

A turbulent international system is likely to spawn, with increasing frequency, international crises. But the very causes of the system's turbulence render forecasting--which actors are most likely to be involved over what issues and under what circumstances--virtually an impossible task. There is, however, some theoretical justification to expect that while forecasting who, what, where and when may be extremely difficult to predict, it is possible to forecast the likelihood that a given dispute will escalate into a crisis. This is conceivable because conflicts, including crises, go through identifiable phases or stages of development. The expectation is that however short the period or ambiguous the events, a crisis has a buildup phase, a confrontation period and a letdown, or to use McClelland's term, an abatement period. An empirical data base of the differential aspects of these stages, conceived in this study as differential interaction sequences, would contribute substantially to forecasting the likelihood that a given threat situation will evolve into a full-blown crisis.

In CONFLICT AND DEFENSE, Kenneth Boulding says conflicts (viewed in general terms) proceed through definable states. The succession of states of a conflict is not random and therefore regularities exist and are identifiable (Boulding, 1962: 19). The principal problem in conflict management is "catching" conflicts early. With the advantages of hindsight, axial points in a crisis can often be detected, but such diagnostic practices are seldom satisfactory. What is clearly needed is a more complete understanding about the sequential dynamic of a conflict-ridden situation which locates a crisis within a particular stage of development. On the basis of this knowledge, information is then available which anticipates the most likely trajectory of the crisis in the future.

Quincy Wright (1965) and Morton Deutsch (1969: 11-25; 1973) concur with Boulding that conflicts do in fact escalate through identifiable states. More specific to crises, Young (1968: 18), McClelland (1972: 88-101), Kahn (1965), Bloomfield and associates (1967: 5-6; 1969: 14-31; 1971: 34-36), Schwartz (1972: 171, 172), Snyder (1972: 218, 219), Farrar (1973: 276-278), Russett (1962: 3-12), Abel (1941: 853-859), Schelling (1966), Barton (1963), and Withey (1962; 19), all maintain crises pass through distinct phases. This notion permits, even encourages, the presumption that identifiable interaction sequences characterize different phases of an escalating conflict. Of

interest here is the interaction sequence that distinguishes the pre-confrontation, or buildup phase.

A review of the crisis literature singles out Bloomfield's CASCON (Computer-Aided System for Handling Information on Local Conflicts) as illustrative of a phase type model of conflicts. CASCON rests on five basic premises: (1) conflicts have a common structure and are not always unique or random, (2) conflicts always go through the "dispute phase" and one or more of the other phases, (3) each phase has distinguishable factors some of which escalate the conflict while others tend to subdue it, (4) changes in these factors affect the likelihood of the conflict moving from one phase to the other, and (5) the trajectory of a local conflict can be changed by policies designed to minimize and/or offset violence promoting factors.

Bloomfield and his associates conceived all local conflicts as stemming from some substantive dispute. The issue may vary, but the principal feature of the conflict's first phase is the fact that the dispute is not conceived in military terms by any of the antagonists. Consequently, this dispute phase is distinguished by its non-military character. An escalatory threshold is breached when the military option is introduced into the dispute. The second phase, the pre-hostilities stage, represents a transition from the dispute stage where antagonists see the military option as more likely and more appropriate in the resolution of the dispute. It does not mean, however, that violence has actually occurred. Another phase threshold is violated when military force is actually used. The use of violence in the hostility stage is systematic, it generally engulfs more participants, larger geographic area, greater volatility and escalatory potential. The post-hostilities, or fourth phase, commences when military violence ceases, and is followed by the final stage which occurs when the dispute is no longer perceived in military terms by the respective parties.

Figure 1. below, depicts the ii.I.T. model.

```
**************************
*                  Phase I     Dispute, pre-hostilities,
*                              pre-military
*              **************
*              *    Phase II    Pre-hostilities, but seen
*              *                in military terms
*              *
DISPUTE     CONFLICT   Phase III  Hostilities
*              *
*              *    Phase IV   Termination of hostil-
*              *               ities, but military
*              *               option remaining
*              **************
*                  Phase V     Post-conflict, but
*                              dispute remaining
**************************
                   S           Settlement of dispute
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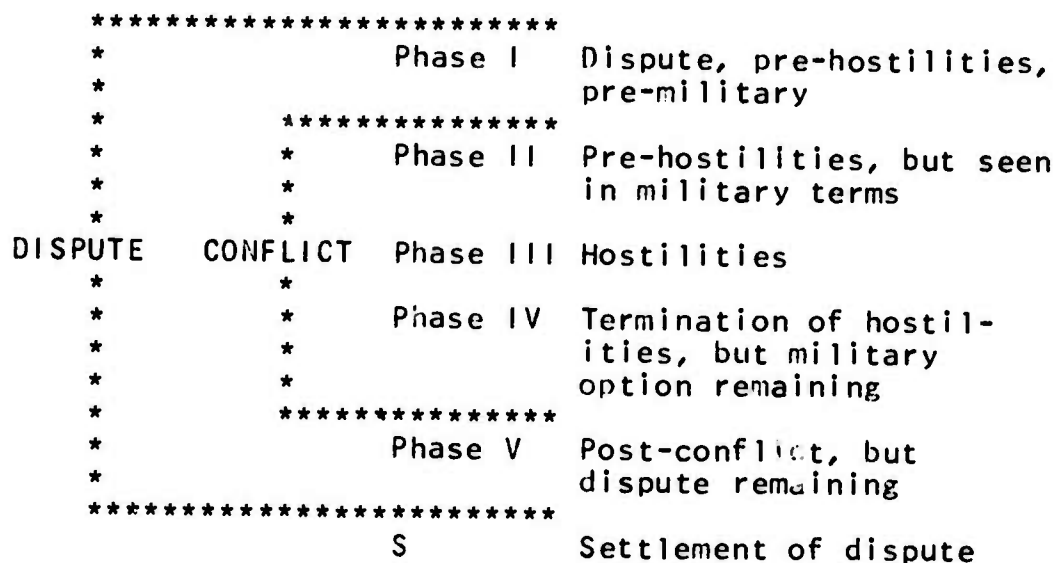
CASCON'S design is supposedly fashioned after the needs of foreign policy planners in crises. Bloomfield and his associates are disquieted by the low ebb of crisis management policy planning in the U.S. government. This condition can be attributed to the scant level of knowledge about crisis dynamics as well as the standard bureaucratic inertia and games arguments. To alleviate some of the knowledge problems, CASCON incorporates the idea that information should be available to policy planners to compare current crises with previous situations to find policy-relevant similarities, or dissimilarities. Comparable information, organized according to the phases of a conflict, easily retrieved, and policy-relevant are intermediate features in CASCON design.

One way CASCON achieves its policy relevance is by focusing on the control measures adopted by different parties during different phases of the conflict. Conflict control, a concept very similar to the coping concept in this study, is used to answer the question, "what would one do if the objective were to minimize international violence?" (Bloomfield and Beattie, 1971: 36). The

objectives for control vary depending on the phase of the crisis. Throughout all phases, but particularly during the dispute phase, control measures intended to eradicate the underlying causes are repeatedly employed. During the pre-hostilities phase, control measures are implemented to prevent the use of coercive diplomacy and/or to restrict the scope of potential hostilities. After violence has erupted, control measures are initiated to moderate or terminate the violence. During the fourth phase, when open hostilities have ceased, measures are embraced to prevent the resumption of coercion. Once the conflict has de-escalated to the dispute phase once again, strategies are adopted to resolve the dispute and to avoid any further re-escalation. In CONTROLLING SMALL WARS, Bloomfield and Leiss (1969) show for selected local conflicts, which factors in different phases are operative, which control measures are used to offset escalatory factors, and which to reinforce conflict minimizing forces.

CASCON is representative of the phase-type models of crisis development, but Herman Kahn's ON ESCALATION (1965) is probably the best known phase model. Kahn makes no pretext to having a general theory of conflict, but the model is based on a fundamental conceptualzation of escalation. Kahn holds "... the tactics and strategy of escalation are, to some degree, the tactics and strategy of negotiation and persuasion in a context of coercion" (Kahn, 1965: 246). Kahn offers a "ladder" of escalation as a means of facilitating thinking about emerging conflicts. Movement up the escalatory ladder comes as thresholds are breached. Rungs on the escalation ladder are linearly arranged and refer to increasing levels of conflict intensity. Specific crises are not thought to follow rigidly from one rung of the ladder to the next. What is important in Kahn's mind is the region of conflict intensity depicted by each rung and the dynamics of moving from one level to the next. The ladder is clearly not a theory of international relations, but as Kahn says, it "may be used to set a context for the discussion of escalations in terms of regions of the ladder, steps up and down the ladder, rungs of the ladder, and so forth" (Kahn, 1965: 38).

The upper reaches of the ladder include such rungs as "Spasm or Insensate War", "Civilian Devastation Attack", or "Slow-Motion Countercity War" are inappropriate in the present context. The rungs of the ladder delineating the conflict regions of a traditional crisis are however, germane; they include:

(Nuclear War Is Unthinkable Threshold)
9.   Dramatic Military Confrontations
8.   Harassing Acts of Violence
7.   "Legal" Harassment--Retortions   "Traditional
6.   Significant Mobilization   Crises"
5.   Show of Force
4.   Hardening of Positions-
     Confrontation of Wills
     (Don't Rock the Boat Threshold)
3.   Solemn and Formal Declarations
2.   Political, Economic, and Diplomatic   "Subcrisis
1.   Ostensible Crisis   Maneuvering"

At the subcrisis level, all the "sounds" of a real crisis are made, but this maneuvering, though not without some justification, is artifical, --meaning it is not quite credible. In the second conflict region, acts are taken by the parties to inflict discomfort and inconvenience on another. These acts are perceived, and accurately so, as threatening by the respective parties. According to Kahn the objectives are to punish, pressure and convey information to the opposing party.

The traditional crisis region involves new stresses. Positions are hardened, demonstrations and displays of force are more frequent, acts of violence are common and opposing nations are brought "eyeball to eyeball" in tests of will, nerve, commitment, and resolve. Despite this, national decision makers are apprehensive about taking too dramatic a step in this period for fear of escalating the conflict to an unmanageable level, meaning a nuclear one. "There is, therefore, a tendency not to let even a low-level crisis start--a constraint not to rock the nuclear boat" (Kahn, 1965: 42).

Elsewhere, Kahn along with Anthony Wiener, argue that crises frequently have the following characteristics.

1.   Events often converge to cause a high
     degree of complexity.
2.   Time pressures increase.
3.   Adequacy of information seems to
     decrease.
4.   Uncertainties seem to increase.
5.   Instrumental control is decreased.
6.   Decision-makers are under extreme
     personal stress.
7.   Internal decision and bargaining
     relations change.

8.   Alliance decision and bargaining
      relations change (Wiener and Kahn,
      1962: 7-16).

Kahn,   following   the   guidelines   established   by   these
characteristics and the traditional crisis rungs, analyzes
the Cuban missile crisis of October, 1962. The examination
is   cursory   and   restricted,   but   it   does   suggest   the
applicability of Kahn's regions of conflict and movement up
and down the ladder of escalation.

      Quincy Wright (1965) has suggested a comparatively
simpler four stage model of conflict. The first stage is
where   the   parties   become   aware   of   certain   key
inconsistencies. These inconsistencies are followed by a
period of rising tensions and difficulties. Tensions
produced in the second phase of the conflict give rise to
pressures just short of military force to mediate the
tensions and inconsistencies typifying the third period. The
final stage of the conflict is encountered when the military
is used to intervene and war develops.

      Quincy Wright takes a different tact to the threshold
issue; he emphasizes a perceptual basis for moving from one
state to the next. His factors include: (1) a willingness to
escalate, (2) the importance of the perceived national
interests in jeopardy by the conflict, (3) the perception of
available armed forces, (4) the perception of the cost of an
outbreak of hostilities, (5) the perception of world
opinion, and (6) the perception of vulnerabilities to
destruction. Each of these factors functions as a threshold
in Wright's model. Their operation is so obvious it hardly
bears developing, but by way of an example, it could be
hypothesized that: the greater the willingness to escalate
to eliminate the inconsistencies, then the more likely the
conflict will breach a threshold and move to a new level of
intensity.

      Wright's inclusion of these perceptual or judgmental
factors is an interesting acceptance of Richard Lazarus'
point that threats exist when an evaluation is made of a
situation   to   the   effect   that   a   future   state   of
undesirability is implied. "The appraisal of threat is not a
simple perception of the elements of the situation, but a
judgment, an inference in which the data are assimilated to
a constellation of ideas and expectations. If you change
this background of cognition, the same situation will now
have a very different significance, perhaps no longer
signaling harm to the individual" (Lazarus, 1966: 44).
Cognitive   appraisal   of   an   interaction   sequence   is   an

important component in coping with threat situations. More will be made of this point later, but one of the basic premises of the approach to international crises espoused here, is that the cognitive appraisal by national policy elites of an international dispute is a vital intervening variable in the escalation dynamic. Actions will be taken on the basis of these appraisals. Coping strategies endeavoring to deal with inter-state stresses will be adopted, in the main, consistent with the view policy elites have of the future (Kelly, 1959: 46). This anticipation of the future, based on inferences taken directly from observable events occuring at the present, gives a threat situation one element of its dynamic, emergent potential.

It is a fairly common tendency among scholars to view a crisis in three essential stages: an initial buildup stage, the peak stage, and the resolution stage. Schwartz's view of a crisis takes this form (1972: 171, 172). The initial period is earmarked by a distinct deviation in pre-existent patterns of behavior, tensions, commitments, or whatever else has a known, pre-established norm. The normalcy idea has been successfully tested in a number of recent empirical studies the first of which were conducted by McClelland and others in the Taiwan Straits Crisis study (1967) and followed up during the World Event/Interaction Survey project,# and again later by others in the event-data movement (Hoggard, 1970a; 1970b; Tomlinson, 1971; McClelland, 1968; Azar and Koehler, 1972; Azar, 1972). The peak period contains the major strategic moves in the conflict. Political, diplomatic and economic stresses are most acute in this phase thereby demanding policy decisions which will turn the conflict one way or toward the other, that is toward escalation or resolution. The resolution-of-crisis embodies decisions which establish new behavioral norms, new alignments, or commitments. Schwartz's model is highly influenced by his acceptance of a crisis classification where (1) the quality and quantity of committed military and political capability, and (2) the immediacy of the crisis confrontation are the strategically-relevant information for decision makers. Crisis management strategies implemented by national policy elites are primarily designed to influence the behavior and attitudes of enemy foreign policy-makers (Schwartz, 1967: 470, 473).

From a sample of crises Schwartz uses to test the variations of the decision making behavior in simulated and historical cases, it is noted that the initiation, peak and resolution stages are restricted to a few days.

Table 1. THE SAMPLE OF CRISES STUDIED BY
    HISTORICAL-ANALYTIC METHODS*

Crisis	Year	Initiation	Peak	Resolution
Korea	1950	June 24-25	June 26-29	June 30-July 1
Suez	1956	Oct 29-Nov 3	Nov 4-6	Nov 7
Lebanon	1958	July 14-15	July 16-19	July 20-Aug 3
Quemoy	1958	Aug 29-31	Sept 1-7	Sept 28-Oct 15
Berlin	1961	Feb-June	July-Sept	Oct-Dec
Cuba	1962	Oct 22-24	Oct 25-27	Oct 28
Tonkin	1964	Aug 8-9	Aug 4	Aug 5
Cyprus	1964	Aug 8-9	Aug 10-11	Aug 12-15

*This table is taken from Schwartz, 1972: 172.

It is not clear whether these phases would be longer in
other crises not included in Schwartz's sample. Certainly
other analysts would allow for this possibility. Schwartz's
analysis does proceed from an interaction point of view
where the crisis is a critical turning point in a conflict
between parties. This view does not dictate the position
that each phase duration be restricted to a few days, but it
does appear to be germane to Schwartz's approach.

Glen Snyder (1972) proposes yet another stage model of
crises which is somewhat more detailed than the one advanced
by David Schwartz. The elements of crisis bargaining capture
most of Snyder's attention but he does present an
interesting developmental view of crises.

An international crisis, Snyder contends, is
"international politics in microcosm" (1972: 217). As such
they contain all of the dynamic elements of international
politics which normally undergird the periods of quiet
diplomacy, but are hyperextended in a crisis. A crisis is,
therefore, a "concentrated distillation" of the elements
that are normally at work in foreign affairs.
Definitionally, Snyder views a crisis as a "transitional
zone" between peace and war. Crisis behavior is a mixture of
both peacetime diplomacy and coercion, and it is this
mixture that makes a crisis so fascinating to study.

From this vantage, it is useful, Snyder explains, to
view crises from a stage model. The pre-crisis stage,
growing out of a background of peacetime politics, involves
an activization of a conflict. The pre-crisis gains momentum
because at least one party in the system is discontent with
conditions as they stand and expresses, or at least

intimates, a willingness to alter the status quo. This expression of dissatisfaction is met with resistance by the targets toward whom it is directed and an exchange of demands, warnings, accusations, all fairly mild of course, follows. As yet violence, and certainly war are essentially inappropriate and unused policy alternatives. If unresolved, the pre-crisis phase is followed by a "challenge" by one party which is resisted by the opposition resulting in a substantial increase in the possibility of war breaking out. The challenge may be verbal bahavior or it may involve some display or show of force. A period of direct confrontation evolves as a consequence of this challenge. Coercive diplomacy, increasing tensions, solidification and hardening of positions, and efforts to gain control of the situation are inherent in the confrontation stage. From this point a transition to war, a further escalation of the situation can occur or the crisis situation can deescalate into a negotiation phase. It may even follow that some limited form of war will break out quickly followed by a negotiation period. Unquestionably the result of any one of the phases will modify the participants' perceptions which in turn will affect the nature of the new peacetime conditions once achieved.

Snyder acknowedges that this stage model is somewhat of an ideal type. Even a cursory examination of historical cases reveals that crises have great variability and diversity. He feels, therefore, that whatever empirical similarities there may be, will, of neccessity, be rather general. This stage model is useful to Snyder as a scaffolding whereupon the bargaining process can be drapped. In conclusion, Snyder remarks,

We have, in a sense, come around full circle from our opening remarks which emphasized that an international crisis is "international politics distilled," and bottled in a small container of time. Of course, such factors such as time pressure, urgency of decision, and momentuousness of possible outcomes lend special characteristics to crises which are not found in "ordinary" diplomacy. It is still valid to say, however, that crises thend to galvanize, concentrate, and bring out in high relief most of the central forces and elements in international politics, revealing their relationships in their starkest and most explicit forms. The dilemmas of crisis management--the use of coercove power while avoiding excessive costs and risks, accommodating to the interests of other states at minimum

sacrifice to one's own interests-- are also the
central dilemmas of "statesmanship" in general
(Snyder, 1972: 255).

Russett has also been attracted to the "causes" of war
problem generally and the evolution of conflicts
specifically. The well-known tailor from Yale uses an
automobile accident accounting scheme to explain the origin
of World War 1. Russett rejects the "war guilt" thesis and
accepts Sydney Bradshaw Fay's accidental cause
interpretation of the war's source (Fay, 1928). Fay argued
that the Central Powers in Europe never intended for war to
errupt nor did they realize how close to the brink they had
come until it was too late. Russett adopts this argument as
his central assumption. The major powers did not
deliberately want general war in much the same way that the
driver of a car does not purposely collide with a truck.
Russett observes "... the war or accident arises because of
numerous acts of commission and of neglect, acts whose
probable consequences were not foreseen at the time"
(Russett, 1962: 4). The surprise dimension in Russett's
accident accounting scheme, comes when the negative
consequences of inadvertent behavior suddenly become
unavoidable. Unless "accidental causes" are present then
Russett's model is inapplicable. To accomodate the demands
of his accounting scheme, four elements are choosen: Cause
(remote, mediate, and direct); Key Event, Point of Surprise;
and, Point of No Escape. These are not overly precise
concepts as Russett himself recognizes. Cause refers to
those factors without which there is an "overwhelming
probability" that war would not have resulted. Remote cause
are conditions which make possible the chain of events
leading to the hostilities. Mediate causes are acts that (1)
precede the outbreak of violence, (2) lead quickly to
surprise, and (3) follow the surprise increasing the
situation's general deterioration. Direct causes are actions
taken by the parties to the dispute which come before the
key event. A key event is the declaration or the acutal
outbreak of general war. Russett allows for the prospects of
the "phoney war", like the 1939-1940 example, so he reserves
the key event to the actual outbreak of violence. The point
of surprise is an awareness factor; it becomes operative
when policy makers realize that the inevitable state of war
is upon them. When war can no longer be prevented and
nothing the parties can do will forestall the inevitability
of a sustained conflict, then the point of no escape has
been broached.

Russett is satisfied that the model is capable of

filtering out those actions which, had they been averted, could possibly have avoided general war. Russett proceeds to suggest what might have been done to avert this accidental war.

Theodore Abel (1941) advanced a four-phase scheme to crisis maturation. Abel takes the general position that all social phenomenon are the products of developmental processes. There are many contributory factors and causes are extremely difficult to pinpoint. Abel draws a parallel between the study of war and criminalty where it was learned that individuals become criminals not because of some general causes or even multiple causes combining together. Criminologists focus, therefore, on process analysis rather than causal analysis per se.

Abel advocates a similar approach to the study of war. "If, instead of the vain search for causes, we turn to a study of the pattern according to which a war situation develops, the element of decision will be found to be an integral part of the war process" (Abel, 1941: 853). Abel has really two points: first that the element of decision will never surface significantly so long as the search is for the generalized causes of war, and secondly, searching for behavioral patterns is a more suitable design procedure in the study of social phenomena, than quantitative tests for causal laws is.

Abel's four phases are: (1) the appearance of a problem, (2) a give-and-take period, (3) issue intensification and crisis development, and (4) the climax. Problem awareness in the first phase usually takes the form of a "threat to power."

> Generally speaking, the events which are interpreted by a group as a threat to its power are precipitated by adverse changes in existing relationships, or changes in the relative position of groups which make it increasingly difficult for the dominant group to maintain its power. A conflict situation arises when the resistance of another group creates an obstacle to the intention of eliminating the threat to power" (Abel, 1941: 854).

The give and take phase arrests the attention of the parties on one another's behavior. Here the interactive interplay of their behavior gives the crisis its internal dynamic. The next phase tends to highlight and focus the issue while limiting the range of policy alternatives. Under these

conditions a distinct crisis occurs. The crisis' climax begins when negotiations fail to resolve the conflict and other forms of coercive diplomacy prove inadequate. What is important about Abel's model is that it identifies these stages years before the hostilities ever begin. In this sense the phases are longer than what is generally understood to be the case in the other phase models. Nevertheless Abel's ideas about the importance of patterns, processes, decisions and the four stages could, it seems, be applied to crises as well as more general conflicts.

Another valuable contribution to the idea of phases is Morton Deutsch's work on productive conflicts. In his Kurt Lewin Memorial Address before the American Psychological Association in 1968, Professor Deutsch laid out an extensive discussion of both productive and destructive conflicts. Deutsch applies a phase scheme only to productive conflicts but it can be readily fitted to destructive conflicts since Deutsch views them as nothing more than deviant cases of constructive processes.

Deutsch is satisfied that conflicts are not intrinsically destructive, a view held by many conflict theorists including most notably Lewis Coser (1956). What interests Deutsch most is the question whether there are distinguishable processes which result in constructive outcomes as opposed to destructive ones? Are deadly, destructive processes substantially different in character from promotive conflict processes? After reviewing various authors and to answer this question Deutsch offers the following overlapping conflict sequence.

1. An initial period which leads to the experiencing and recognition of a problem which is sufficiently arousing to motivate efforts to solve it.

2. Second, a period of concentrated effort to solve the problem through routine, readily available, or habitual actions.

3. Then, with the failure of customary processes to solve the problem, there is an experience of frustration, tension, and discomfort which leads to a temporary withdrawal from the problem.

4. During this incubation period of withdrawal and distancing from the problem it is perceived from a different perspective and is reformulated in a way which permits new orientations to a solution to emerge.

5.   Next, a tentative solution appears in a moment of insight often accompanied by a sense of exhilaration.

6.   Then, the solution is elaborated and detailed and tested against reality. And

7.   finally, the solution is communicated to relevant audiences.

There are three key psychological elements in this process:

1.   the   arousal   of   an   appropriate   level   of motivation to solve the problem;

2.   the development of the conditions which permit the reformulation of the problem once an impasse has been reached; and,

3.   the   concurrent   availability of diverse ideas which can be flexibly combined to novel and varied patterns (Deutsch, 1969:20-21).

These   phases   can   be   summarized   as   the   problem identification   phase,   the   routine   response   phase,   the failure-withdraw   phase,   the   incubation   phase   and   the solution phase. The scheme is evidently influenced strongly by Deutsch's underlying assumption that mutually cooperative orientations   are   the   most   likely   strategies   to   resolve   the conflict.   It   is   quite   often   the   case that parties to a conflict   do   not   have "mutually cooperative" perspectives. One   party to the conflict may recognize a conflict and work to   resolve   it   while   the   opposing   party is content with conditions   as   they   are. Or if both recognize the problem, they   may   take   conflicting   resolution strategies. Deutsch suggests,   and much of his empirical research confirms, that when   discontinuities   exist   in   the   parties' orientations, a change   toward   mutuality will occur (Deutsch, 1949a; 1949b; 1958; 1960; Deutsch and others, 1967).

Russett,   Abel and Deutsch have all had an influence on L. L. Farrar's approach to the "metamorphosis" of a crisis. Farrar   offers   his   phase   model   of six level sequences as being   less   abstract,   capable   of   handling accidental and intential   conflicts, constructive and destructive disputes, and   focusing more on the behavioral factors and less on the psychological   factors   than   the   other   models.   Farrar maintains   that   his   phases   are   more   distinct   and   the

conflicts unfold in a more decisive order. He tests his
levels against 13 cases which seem to satisfy him that the
model warrants "somewhat broader conclusions." The six
phases are: the background, the incident/incubation, the
confrontation, the negotiation/mediation, resolution and the
epilogue/aftermath phases.

The background stage can vary in length and it is
extremely difficult to pinpoint exactly when it begins.
Farrar limits its duration to a few years, at the most a
decade. Though he adopts a short term background because it
seems more applicable to the metamorphosis of a crisis as
opposed to a more general conflict. The incident/incubation
stage begins either with a decisive incident or when the
plan for confrontation commences. Farrar allows for the
accidental or deliberate initiation of a crisis in this
stage. The confrontation stage of the crisis starts when the
planning is implemented, or when an incident provokes a
crisis between parties. There can be no crisis unless
antagonists actually confront one another. Once negotiations
begin, however, the confrontation ends. The
negotiation/mediation state begins when efforts are launched
to resolve the basic dispute. This period may take the
form of direct negotiations, mediation by third parties, by
arbitration or intervention by a third party. The stage ends
when discussions fail and the crisis escalates or when they
succeed and the issue is resolved peacefully The resolution
stage begins when (1) grounds are established for settling
the issue by means of an agreement, (2) recognition that no
agreement is possible and the issue is postponed; or in the
case of a violent crisis, (3) settlement is not possible and
at least one of the parties decides the issue requires
violence. The resolution stage applies to the crisis, but
not necessarily the underlying dispute. It is just as
difficult to determine offences when a crisis ends as it is
fixing a starting point. The epilogue of a crisis involves a
reduction of tensions.

The purpose of this paper has been to review those
authors who have (1) maintained that crises, like conflicts
in general, pass through distinct, recognizeable phases, (2)
labelled and described those phases, (3) proposed the
sequential order, if one could be proposed, for each phase,
and (4) specified the nature of thresholds which if breached
cause a transition from one step-function to the next. The
CASCON model suffers because the violence threshold is too
rigid. Violence can erupt quickly, and then subside without
ever really changing the character of the dispute. In other
words violence is introduced early but not sustained and to
view the crisis as being in the pre-hostilities phase is

neither   functional for analytical or policy purposes.
Farrar's model suffers from a different form of rigidity. He
supposes   that   it   is   sufficient   to argue that his stages
follow a regular sequence. There is, however, nothing in his
empirical analysis which confirms this contention. Russett's
model, on the other hand, is too restricted to accidental
conflicts; it is simply not general enough to really be
helpful. It has a bias against purposeful violence. Another
major weakness is that its terms and their definitions are
so imprecise that reliability would be very difficult to
achieve. Aside from Deutsch's sequences few of the phase
models handle overlapping sequences very well. And except
for Kahn's notion of activities within region's of conflict,
few of the models allow for behavioral variability.

The conclusion is that though scholars have advanced
the notion that conflicts proceed through identifiable
phases and some schemes have been present; no phase model
could be used to locate a crisis in a given phase of
development and on the basis of that knowledge, provide a
probability estimate of its proceeding to the next phase.
These two tasks are as yet unfulfilled by any of the models.

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